

Statement on States of Public Emergency

A State of Public Emergency is a legitimate security measure that provides immediate deleterious effect on criminal violence. It is a strategic tool that saves lives, reduces homicides rapidly, and provides reprieve to the families who live in a permanent state of fear because of the brutality and brazen actions of violence producers. A State of Emergency is merely one of the tools that the security forces utilize to stem the high rates of homicides, stop the bloodletting and create a space for normal policing operations.

Fact is, the murder rate across the Southern crescent of the Kingston Metropolitan Area far exceeds the regional and world average for murders. The regional average for murders is **17.2 per 100,000** and the world average is **6.1 per 100,000**. Last year, murders within the area four police division were **77 per 100, 00 in Kingston Eastern; 197.3 per 100, 000 in Kingston Central; 172.8 in Kingston Western; 77 per 100,000 in St. Andrew South; and 78.5 per 100, 000 in St. Andrew Central**. For the residents in these communities these statistics relate to family members, neighbours, sons and daughters, and

friends, who were killed by heartless, armed thugs. The State of Emergency within this area is to restore some sense of normalcy for these families, so that they can feel safe enough to walk through their communities without fear of gang reprisals. So that the children can sleep comfortably without the sound of gun-shots. The State of Emergency is for these people, our people, who deserve to live in an environment that is free of criminal violence.

Between January 18, 2018 and January 31, 2019, when the first SOE was in full effect in St. James, the Division experienced significant declines in both Murder and Shooting. Murder fell by 70% when compared to a similar period prior, when no SOE was in effect. Shooting also experienced a similar spectacular drop of 62%.

Similarly, within the Westmoreland Division, the data reveals that for the period between August 18, 2020 and October 10, 2021 when there was no SOE in force, the Division recorded 125 murders and 138 shootings. However, when these figures are compared to a similar period prior, when the Division was

under the imposition of an SOE, they show increases in the order of 51% and 29% for Murder and Shooting, respectively.

Gang conflict has been largely contributing to this upward trend in murders and shooting. The perpetrators are heavily armed ruthless thugs who show no mercy when carrying out their acts of violence. Between January 1 and November 12 of this year, the police **recovered 112 firearms in St. James,** and **1923 rounds of ammunition.** This comprised 82 pistols, 18 rifles, 6 revolvers, 4 homemade guns and 2 SMG. As a Government, we have given our commitment to the people of Jamaica to do what is necessary to break the back of criminal violence in Jamaica. The gangs are heavily armed, and we must provide the security forces with all the tools they need to undermine these thugs.

Solving this endemic ecosystem of criminal violence cannot be achieved with knee-jerk reactions. This Government has been utilizing a combination different security measures to respond to the crime situation in Jamaica. In some instances, we will require and will utilize emergency powers to cauterize the killing and save lives. Similarly, we continue to prioritize

social investment for sustainable crime reduction and social transformation. We will continue to build out the associated services for swift and sure justice, such as forensic, ballistic and pathology capabilities in order to secure the irrefutable scientific evidence to bring these criminals to justice. We are advancing an aggressive legislative agenda to ensure that once the irrefutable evidence is secured the penalties will be commensurate with the crimes. (The on-going historic trial of the leader of a known criminal gang signals the coming together of this government's investment in the science, technology, and improved capability to modernize policing).

We will continue to invest strategically in Jamaica's security response to crime. We are confident that by staying this course we will break the back of this scourge of criminal violence in Jamaica. That is our commitment to the people of Jamaica, and the residents in the affected communities, in particular.